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1916

WASHINGTON

AND OTHER SONNETS

BY

GEORGE ALBERT ALDRICH

[RICH. GALD]

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"The Thinker"

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BY

GEORGE ALBERT ALDRICH

[RICH. GALD]

SAN FRANCISCO

A. M. ROBERTSON

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DESIROUS, EVER, OF BECOMING PERTINENCE WITH ALL THINGS OF THE MOMENT, AND FEARFUL LEST A BENIGHTED SONNET-WORLD SHOULD LANGUISH, AND FADE INTO THE OBSCURITY OF A POSSIBLE NEW-ERA APATHY, WE ONCE AGAIN ESSAY UPON A GENEROUS AND CONSIDERATE PUBLIC; REQUESTING, HUMBLY, WE MAY BE AT LEAST READ.

*The "*WASHINGTON*" sonnet appeared in the San Bernardino, California "Index", on the twenty-second of February, nineteen-sixteen.*

*The "*WAR*" sonnet has been republished from a former edition, circulated in nineteen-fifteen.*

*The "*CHARM OF SCENE*" sonnet was composed at the Berkeley Campus-theatre, Berkeley, California, while patiently awaiting the beginning of a certain afternoon performance.*

THE AUTHOR.

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WASHINGTON.

This welcome peneplain of sunshine days:
  These fields Elysian of beauteous peace:
  This wonder-warmth, a wealth without surcease:
This innocence of woe and warlike craze,
Where's naught of cannon-roar or watch-fire blaze:
  This life poetic, distant far from Greece:
  This pasture green, of lambkin and of fleece,
Hath need of Washington's redeeming ways.

Then, clang ye forth ye cymbals, and ye drum;
  And twang the bow-string or melodious lute,
Then, sound the trumpet-blast (or banjo strum),
  The soft oboe, or e'en the woody flute:
But, bear in mind you love your country some;
  And hate all ways of war-gods, too astute.

Oh! poetry of distance now appeal!
Enchantment true!
* * * * * * * *
We want not thundrous war:
We would not dwell 'neath doom's mephitic star:
Nor see and bleed; nor groan at cruel steel.
To stagger at the blow; to cringe, to reel,
[Great Jove's relentless mockery of God!]
Preferring bloody dust-bathed Earth, ill-trod
With vengeance, lust, rapine; the voidal meal!

We yearn for prolegomena; for truth:
That something which, if worlds were justly made,
Would govern savage man in days of youth;
And consummate all plans as they were laid.
Here, strife's incarnate, vain, reptilic tooth
Sunk deep of human flesh, must die or fade.

SONNET.

To while away a Lincoln Day once more!
  Again to dwell in mem'ry of the past:
  And then to taste its nectar, while 'twould last,
As honey-bees the rose e'en to its core!
To dip and sip: to sip and dip its store
  Of precious product dissipative fast:
  [E'er victim of the frost or wintry blast]
And waft to some Elysian, mystic shore!

To while away a Lincoln Day again:
  To mingle with the ghosts of master-mind;
And patriotic hearts which pulsed in pain,
  When Christ's bright standard fell so far behind;
And made man's real purpose here too plain,
  Too evident, ah me, too sadly blind!

A SUMMER DAY.

Now chant we gratitude to all the gods:
In rhythmic measure, too, our thanks pour forth:
And inward, turn to love's undoubted worth;
Equating ends, with product of Earth's odds,
To study smaller thoughts—of herbs and pods.
A newer brighter sun is now gi'en birth;
And doubtless, too, the blessings crowning Earth
Divine its yields from mellow soils and sods.

Dissolving, let us fuse in summery heat;
And deem it opportunity well sought.
But, being sought, the acme of heart's beat:
The something seldom gotten, rarely bought:
Our Deity's sublimest weather-treat:
For which the soul hath, eons, yearned and fought.

RODIN'S "THINKER".

AN APOSTROPHE.

"This hunched; this crook'd and knotted manly self;
All gauched in corporeal muscle-screw;
Thigh-elbowed on the left, in 'mental-stew',
Would think. But paucity of thought, thou elf,
Secreted 'neath this gruesome, sombred pelf,
Rejects e'en help its primal gods would brew;
And calls gray melancholy, chill, its due;
Encuddling poverty, that bitter wolf!

Yet, still it hath the keenest truth at heart:
Bones steeped in liquored progress of the world:
And brachycephalous, fair brow, whose part
Unnumbered thoughts, to light, have long unfurled.
It knoweth man's still man, as at the start:
That he hath loved this stature knit and knurled."

HOPE EPHEMERAL.

Now hope, ephemeral, doth us possess;
And flowered Nature smiles, once more, upon
A half-lost bosom, wretched, quite forlorn:
And, with poetic touch, our rust-pens dress,
To lift us up to skies of painted guess,
Instructing all the gods we're poet-born;
And dwell in harmony of song in rosy morn,
'Till night its murky curtain hath o'erpressed.

Then, let us live, again, in golden strain;
And, crying forth the memories of old,
Recall in rhyme our fathers' best refrain;
When they saw poesy in burning-gold:
And found a Parthenon in each bold brain:
Eternal song in tales of wealth untold.

THIS CHARM OF SCENE.

This charm of scene should justify, oh Muse,
Another essay of poetic pen;
And thou, our eidolon, shall signal when
To realize surcease of gross abuse;
Release from homeliness of life obtuse
And substitute thy love for hate of men;
Injecting sunshine to man's prosaic den;
And understanding of himself abstruse.

Then sing again the song of mellow gold,
And laugh once more with all the happy pasts,
To glorify romantic tales of old,
And save our souls, while method ancient lasts,
Rejuvenating memories untold,
To shape our fate devoid of War's crude blasts.

INTERPOLATE THY WILL AS LOVE.

Interpolate thy will, oh Muse, as love;
And let us find in peace a breathing space;
That we may win, at length, the noisy race;
To soar in immortality above.
Light-winged on righteousness, as does the dove
Of Christ's best choice. Ambitious life apace,
Ill-doomed to many ever of the chase,
Hath found the gods impossible to prove!

Then (having love as guide), once more our song
Of gold, refulgent as the dawn of joy;
And cast away all noisome bent to wrong;
And give us opulence to be our toy;
Our heart's desire envied of the throng;
Our *ultima thule* without alloy.

AGONY.

Thrice-wrinkled brow, with fevered face ;
And stoop enow to curb one's pace ;
Thrice-crook'd of spine ; and bleared of eye ;
Habitually doomed to sigh ;
To groan and moan ; a soul alone,
A pitiless heart, long turned to stone.
And now a scream ; mayhap a dream,
As life seems floating down the stream ;
And then a screech ! God may but reach
The anguish it is meant to teach !
Agony !

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